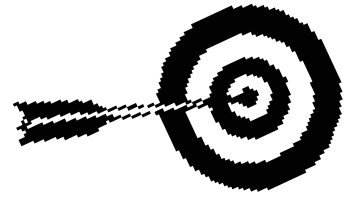


# ON TARGET



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## GDOT LAUNCHES INTERSTATE STUDY TO FORECAST STATE'S FUTURE GROWTH



*Department's study will examine current traffic patterns and forecast future growth as well as look at the interstate's economic impacts.*

The Office of Planning has recently kicked-off an exciting new study that will develop a comprehensive long-range plan for the state's Interstate system - a system whose overall purpose continues to change since its inception in the 1950's. Because the Interstate serves such a variety of users, this 18-month study will apply a strategic approach to ensuring that Georgia's Interstate system is able to serve its users well into the future.

To accomplish this, the study will identify the current and future users, distinguish the various demands that are placed on it, and recognize its critical current and future needs. All analyses will take into account relevant issues such as maintaining connectivity with adjacent states, supporting national defense and commerce, sustaining economic development, enabling emergency evacuation, and ensuring safe and efficient operations.

Within urban areas, the study will be coordinated with the existing transportation plans of each Metropolitan Planning Organization. Outside the urban areas, the study will build upon the comprehensive plans available from the Regional Development Centers. As the study progresses, the Office of Planning will be working with the many stakeholders, including state and local officials, groups and individuals that represent the various users and jurisdictions that interact with the Interstate system.

The study is expected to uncover a variety of interesting information about Georgia's Interstate system, including:

- Local, state, and regional growth trends in population, employment and economic development, as well as trade and commerce
- Economic impacts of the Interstate System on the State and local economies
- Current travel patterns, predicted changes for future travel patterns and demand, and how to provide appropriate accessibility

to the system.

- Possible maintenance, safety, and capacity improvements and how these improvements would affect the system's operation
- Changes in how the system is being used, such as by the trucking industry

The outcome of this study will be a comprehensive and prioritized program of projects that will address mobility and travel demands into the year 2035, as well as an evaluation of potential funding sources to implement these projects. In addition, the study will provide decision-making guidelines and project development guidance that will be used in evaluating all future requests for upgrades to the Interstate system.

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## DEPARTMENT DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GUIDELINES

The Georgia Department of Transportation's Office of Planning, in conjunction with the Office of Equal Opportunity, is currently developing Environmental Justice Planning guidelines for use by the Department, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) and other local planning agencies. Development of the guidelines is consistent with Federal Highway Administration guidance and in response to Executive Order 12898 issued by President Clinton in 1994. The Executive Order reaffirms the non-discrimination policies outlined in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act for race, color and national origin and also includes low-income populations. As a result of the Executive Order, agencies that administer federal programs are required to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs on minority and low income populations.

The guidelines are being developed with input from a Stakeholder Committee comprised of representatives from the state MPO's and Regional Development Centers (RDCs) and a Citizens Advisory Committee nominated by the stakeholders. The Department presented the proposed guidelines to both committees on August 27, 2002 for their input. The guidelines include standard definitions for Environmental Justice planning terminology and recommend a seven step process to be followed for statewide, regional, local planning, and project planning level

*Continued on Page 2*

## ATLANTA SUBURBAN COUNTIES STUDY UPDATE

In Spring of 2001 the Office of Planning began a phased study to establish a formal process for developing transportation plans and programs for (11) eleven counties in the potential 8 hour non-attainment area for Metro Atlanta. The counties included in the study are Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Coweta, Dawson, Forsyth, Hall, Newton, Paulding, Spalding, and Walton Counties. Phase I of the study included five counties; Bartow, Coweta, Forsyth, Newton and Paulding. Phase II includes the remaining (6) six counties and will be underway later this fall. The main purpose of the study is to develop a transportation planning and public involvement process, a transportation plan with a travel demand model, and provide an operations plan for continuation of the transportation planning process.

Phase I - The planning and public involvement process along with the transportation planning process have been completed and are under review by the local officials. During the months of July and August the results of the travel demand model and the needs assessment for the future (year 2030) were presented at numerous stakeholders groups, focus groups, and public dialogue sessions throughout the study area. Comments were recorded and are under consideration for incorporation into the final plan. The study is scheduled for completion in late Fall with final adoption by the local officials. Additional public involvement sessions will be scheduled prior to adoption of the plans. Public announcements for these sessions will be advertised in the local newspapers.

Phase II - This phase is anticipated to begin early this fall and will include the same study elements as Phase I applied to the remaining six county areas.

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## STATE GROWTH CREATES NEW URBAN AREAS

According to the 2000 Census, Georgia is the 6th fastest growing state in the country. Between 1990 and 2000, Georgia grew more than 26.4%, twice the national average of 13.2%. As a result of this tremendous growth, four additional areas in the state are now classified as urbanized: Dalton, Gainesville, Hinesville and Valdosta. This urbanized classification now requires these areas to have a certified transportation planning process in place by October 1, 2005 in order to continue receiving federal transportation funding.

The Office of Planning is working with the local governments in these areas to assist them in establishing their Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The MPO is a forum for cooperative transportation decision making for the metropolitan planning area. The MPO consists of representatives from the local governments, local transit agencies, military installations, GDOT, FTA and FHWA. The MPO and its planning staff is responsible for a 3C (Consultation, Cooperation, and Coordination) planning process. The MPO generally uses 3 committees: the Policy Committee which is the official decision making body, the Technical Coordinating Committee, and the Citizens Advisory Committee.

During July and August, staff from the Office of Planning delivered presentations to local officials and representatives in all four areas. The presentation provided guidance and information on the federal requirements of an MPO. Included was a list of steps and time frames necessary to develop a certified transportation planning process by the 2005 deadline. The first decision from the local governments is to determine which agency will serve as the MPO. The designate must be capable of conducting transportation planning, be eligible to receive federal funds and have an accounting system capable of tracking the expenditure of federal funds. Once the area has designated which agency will serve as their MPO, GDOT will forward this information to the Governor for his approval. The designations must be in

place by May, 2003.

The next step for the Office of Planning will be to meet with the local governments to assist them in determining what the future 20-year planning area boundary will be for the MPO. These meetings are being scheduled for this fall.

GDOT, FHWA and FTA will be providing assistance and guidance to these new urbanized areas as they progress to forming MPOs. In consideration of the 2000 census, assistance will also be provided to the 11 existing MPOs as they re-evaluate their planning area boundaries and committee structures.

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### EJ Criteria.....Continued

processes. The seven steps are:

- Identify potential burdens and benefits
- Identify populations within the study area
- Correlate the identified burdens and benefits to each target population
- Note possible mitigation strategies for disproportionate burdens
- Determine which public participation methodologies to use
- Make Environmental Justice recommendations
- Evaluate the implementation of the EJ process

Specific guidance was provided to complete each step. The Environmental Justice Planning study is being led by PBS&J with assistance from two sub-consultants, Center for Neighborhood Technology and Global Risk Managers. The project includes a demonstration test of the guidelines in a rural and urban area and production of a brochure for public distribution. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

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## GEORGIA DOT NAVIGATES THE STATE'S SCENIC BYWAYS



While residents and visitors have enjoyed the coastal scenery and resources along State Route 99 and US 17 for generations, this stretch of road has recently been recognized by the Georgia Department of Transportation. On May 16th, the State Transportation Board designated the Altamaha Historic Scenic Byway as the fifth official Georgia Scenic Byway, the first designation since 1999. The new route runs for 17 miles through McIntosh and Glynn counties and the city of Darien. Traveling from the Sapelo Island Visitors Center to the historic Needwood Church and School, the byway passes Fort King George, Butler Island and Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantations, the Darien waterfront, sweeping marsh views, and majestic Live Oaks draped with Spanish Moss. Byway leaders hope this designation will help their efforts to preserve the area's natural and cultural resources while attracting visitors from I-95.

Scenic Byway sponsors and supporters will meet at Unicoi State Park and Lodge, October 21-22, for the 2002 Georgia Scenic Byways Conference. The theme for the conference is "Returning to the Road Less Traveled" and the opening Keynote Speaker will be Neely Young, Editor

*The Altamaha Historic Scenic Byway in southeast Georgia near I-95 is the state's newest designated highway. Leaders want to preserve the region's natural and cultural heritage while increasing tourism in the area.*

*Continued on Page 4*

## DEPARTMENT IS BRAGGING ABOUT CYCLING

On June 15, 2002, the 22nd annual Bike Ride Across Georgia (BRAG) event started from the City of Rockmart in northwest Georgia. BRAG is the event of the year for bicyclists in Georgia and visitors from other states and nations. From children to senior citizens, all are eager to pedal bicycles for an entire week.

This year the route started in Rockmart with a stop in Rome. Opportunities were available to ride on the Ridge and Valley Scenic Byway before arriving in Dalton on Monday night. Eljay was the Tuesday destination. The route then turned north to Hiawassee for Wednesday. The strong and most physically fit will experience some of the hills and vistas of the Russell-Brasstown Scenic Byway. Thursday's destination is Toccoa, and riders celebrate Friday in Hartwell.

Please stay tuned to the GDOT web site for information on next year's BRAG. Make cycling part of your life.

The first Georgia DOT Bicycle Map is now available! This map is packed with useful cycling information, safety tips and is designed to assist cyclists in planning longer trips throughout Georgia.

In addition to showing bicycling routes, the map discusses "Rules of the Road," cycling etiquette and Georgia law as it pertains to cycling. A table of weather patterns in Georgia throughout the year, safety tips, and bicycling contacts are also provided. Make sure you get your copy of this latest publication of GDOT. The map is sure to aid in a safe, happy and informative cycling experience for all!

Visit the GDOT web site at <http://www.dot.state.ga.us/dot/plan-prog/planning/projects/bicycle/maps/index.shtml>

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*New Georgia cycling map will aid riders on their trips throughout the state.*

**Scenic Byways.....Continued**

and Publisher of Georgia Trend magazine. Breakout sessions will cover such topics as historic preservation, resource conservation, byway marketing, and project funding. The conference will also include a tour of the Russell-Brasstown National Scenic Byway.

Interest in the Georgia Scenic Byways Program has grown significantly in the last few years with 16 potential routes now at various stages of the designation process. Four potential byways have had their eligibility applications approved and are working towards development of their Corridor Management Plans.

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*The Russell-Brasstown Scenic Byway in northeast Georgia offers motorists an opportunity to enjoy the natural landscape.*

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